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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

18 April 1980

MEMORANDUM

IRAN: KHOMEINI AIMS TO DEFEAT PRESIDENT CARTER

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Ayatollah Khomeini has for some time equated the US and the Shah as enemies of Iran. There are increasing indications that Khomeini now sees President Carter as his primary opponent--the personification of anti-Islamic influences--and that he intends to prolong the hostage issue in order to bring about President Carter's defeat. He sees the US break in diplomatic relations with Iran as a victory in his struggle to purge Iran of Western influences. Should other Western allies follow the US lead, it would only enhance Khomeini's sense of victory.

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Khomeini publicly repeated this theme in a recent message to Pope Paul. He

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This memorandum was prepared in the Office of Political Analysis. Information as of 17 April 1980 has been used in preparing this memorandum. Comments and queries are welcome and may be addressed to the Chief of the Center for the Analysis

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asked the Pope "to warn the American Government of the consequences of plunder, injustice, and coercion and advise Mr. Carter, who faces final defeat, to treat nations who want absolute independence...on the basis of human standards." These reports are part of a growing body of evidence that Khomeini now views the US in general and President Carter in particular as his primary antagonists. [redacted]

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Khomeini's anti-West feelings can be traced back as far as the early 1960s, when he led a campaign against US efforts to gain diplomatic immunity for its military personnel in Iran. He opposed the Shah in part because the Shah's modernization program introduced "corrupting" Western influences into Iran--influences that many of the Shia clergy adamantly opposed. Increasingly, Khomeini attacked these influences and stressed the need to purge Iran and Islam of their effects. In 1970, for example he said that:

"For centuries, the agents of colonialism (the West including the United States)....have injected their poisons into the people's minds and ethics until they corrupted them....sick ideas coming from abroad must also be uprooted, and every form of corruption, evil, and deviation in society must be fought." [redacted]

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When Khomeini succeeded in wresting power from the Shah last year, his desire for vengeance was not satisfied. The Shah had to be finally eliminated so that he could never again threaten Khomeini's vision of an Islamic Republic. The Shah's entrance into the US last November brought Khomeini's two hated enemies together. Needing an external enemy both psychologically and politically, and being frustrated by his inability to get the Shah, Khomeini has progressively shifted his animus over the succeeding months. This change has been reflected in his rhetoric, which has shifted from portraying the Shah as the prime opponent, to reviling the Shah as the puppet of the US. [redacted]

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In a speech in December 1979, Khomeini decried pernicious Western influences at great length, with only a passing mention of the Shah:

"The superpowers, which wished to plunder everything we had....to rob us of our brains and to replace them with European ones....They have done this, and they have robbed us of our mental independence....Let our university professors strive so

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that our young people can have their brains changed into independent brains and not colonialist ones. What shame and degradation it is for a country that it has to stretch its hands toward America and ask it for wheat, that it has to take its begging bowl to its enemy and ask the enemy for sustenance." [redacted]

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This change in rhetoric has been paralleled by a change in the posters circulating throughout Iran, indicating the Iranian masses share Khomeini's perception. Last summer, posters circulating in Tehran showed Khomeini in the form of an angel struggling victoriously with a devil with the Shah's face and a small US flag and a Star of David on his cloak. By January, however, the Shah had largely disappeared from the posters in Iran, and the United States became the major opponent. President Carter replaced the Shah as the primary enemy of Iran, the personification of anti-Islamic influences.

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When Khomeini felt he had the Shah on the ropes, he was not satisfied until he had brought about the Shah's final defeat. If our conclusion is correct that President Carter has now replaced the Shah as the major object of animosity, it argues for unremitting hostility upon the part of Khomeini until President Carter, like the Shah, is finally defeated. And the more Khomeini sees himself as being engaged in a struggle with his adversary, the more determined he will be to win that struggle. Khomeini's exultant reaction when the US broke diplomatic relations was genuine. There was a sense of triumph--of having engaged and bested the enemy. For other Western allies to break diplomatic relations with Iran will not bring added pressure to bear upon Khomeini and his hardline followers. On the contrary, it will add to the sense of triumph and victory, for it will be seen as promoting Khomeini's drive to purge Iran of Western influences. [redacted]

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